

Administrator's Report

The year-end annual report is an opportunity for reflecting upon accomplishments of the past year and for looking forward to a new year's set of challenges. While the Selectmen's Report chronicles many highlights of 2005, including SAD 75 issues, the revaluation and the capital roads project, the administrator's report highlights broad areas of interest.



Kristi Eiane

Communications. An area of considerable development in 2005 was updating the Town's website at www.harpswell.maine.gov. Providing information through the website is a valuable communication tool. Items such as Town ordinances, the Bulletin (municipal newsletter), minutes of Selectmen's Meetings, and public notices are posted on the site. This year, for the first time, the Town intends to post the complete audit report by its new auditing firm, Runyon, Kersteen and Ouellette of South Portland, Maine. In another effort to provide more Harpswell taxpayers with information about Town issues, the Harpswell Bulletin, which is generally published three to four times a year, is now being mailed not only to residents of the Town but to all Harpswell taxpayers wherever they reside. Visit the Town's website and provide us with feedback so we can make improvements in the availability and delivery of information.

Land Use Planning. Implementing an update of the Comprehensive Plan was a major accomplishment in 2005. Considerable time and effort was put in by many volunteers and by the Planning Office staff, particularly the Town's Planner. The Town has been proactive in laying out its vision of land use and community development in the next decade. Accomplishing that vision will take more time and discussion as the Town considers what priorities deserve consideration at the implementation level—major topics have been (1) affordable housing and (2) determining what land use activities should or should not occur in the rural and growth areas. Harpswell has worked diligently to put in place ordinance language that assists the Planning Board in reviewing subdivisions, the reconstructions of non-conforming structures as well as major non-residential development projects. Harpswell will continue to look at ordinance language that will guide future development with its high quality of volunteers from the various committees who assist the Town in planning related matters—the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee, the Sub-Committee on Affordable Housing, the Conservation Commission, Planning Board and Town Lands Committee. Major progress was made in 2005 to identify the Town's public access points by using distinct blue and white signage for that purpose. More remains to be done to enhance these valuable assets.

Harbor & Waterfront. Having the most coastline (216 miles) of any municipality in Maine, perhaps the east coast, Harpswell took an important step in 2005 by authorizing the Selectmen to employ a full-time Harbormaster. Jim Hays became the Town's first full-time Harbormaster in July. A full-time person will enable the Town to provide consistent attention to the many harbor and waterfront issues it must confront, perhaps most importantly, the number and placement of over 2200 moorings. The Harbormaster has been provided office space at the Town Office and is more accessible than ever before.

Staffing. In 2005 the Town lost the service of some key staff members: Arthur “Dennis” Moore and Bob Webber at the Recycling Center, Cindy Bryant in the Codes Office and Pat Leary in the Tax Office. The challenge of replacing employees can be viewed as an opportunity to look for new contributors with the necessary skill sets and fresh new perspectives that add value to an organization. The Town has found able replacements in all positions with the addition of Todd Steinman and Jim Gordon at the Recycling Center, Jean Rand in the Codes Office and Jill Caldwell in the Tax Office. Dennis Moore, a long-time Town employee at the Recycling Center who passed away in February, is very much missed by all who worked with him. The facility, which now bears his name, will serve as a lasting tribute to Dennis.

Budget Development. Developing and compiling the Town Meeting budget takes considerable time. From early October through mid-January, the Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) meets on an almost weekly basis to review the detailed components of the budget. Department heads and entities seeking Town funding are invited to the meetings to explain their requests for funding. The administration provides financial information and explanations to the Committee throughout the process. I would especially like to thank Town Treasurer Marguerite Kelly who attended every regular meeting and was invaluable in providing financial information to the BAC. Each year we have improved upon and refined the presentation of the budget and the process of review.

Looking Ahead. Each year brings a new set of challenges as well as continued attention to on-going issues. In 2006, a sub-Committee of the Comp Plan will look at short- and long-term uses of Mitchell Field. With the acquisition of the two houses at the site, the Town has an opportunity to consider what it wishes the uses of the houses to be. One item before the Town will be to consider leasing one of the buildings to a library entity that may wish to operate with assistance from Curtis Memorial Library and partial funding from the Town. In another area of focus in 2006, the Town will look to strengthen its internal controls. We have already reacted to some of the suggestions from the Town’s new auditing firm, and we will continue to institute changes that improve and strengthen our fiscal responsibilities.

As always, feel free to contact the Town Administrator with any issues that need the Town’s attention. Accessibility and responsiveness are critically important to the effectiveness of your local government.



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